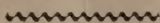


"The Truth shall make you FREE."



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EDITOR'S NOTES.

Natural Selection.

This phrase, which was first used by Darwin, stands for one of the most distant-reaching processes of Nature. It is considered one of the chief factors in evolution. There is constantly going on around us a process of Selection. The animals and plants best fitted to live are by a natural process selected for the purpose, while the unfit are allowed to perish.

The Survival of the Fittest.

Consequently life is a struggle. It is only by effort that we move along. Many able—that is, mentally able—men and women fail, and many inferior—that is, mentally—through dogged pertinacity, succeed. The fittest survive. The "fittest" is not always the best—it may be the meanest and most cunning. Those who adapt themselves to surroundings are the fittest.

The Struggle for Life.

This struggle has taken place from the beginning of things. Struggle, which is everywhere apparent, is a necessary condition of evolution. It is useless, even senseless, to ignore the fact which is so apparent in every department of life. Religious communities are subject to the same order as any other activity of human life.

The Gospel of Enmity.

Many men—and among them men of eminence—have made this struggle an argument for military aggrandisement. War, we are told, is not only necessary, but an ennobling factor of progress.

"Ennobling thoughts depart
When men change swords for
ledgers."

So sings Wordsworth. It is true that war has played a part in social evolution.

The Gospel of Love.

The mistake is to assume that the struggle will always continue on the same plane. There will be struggle, but the foe will be "another." Instead of struggling with each other, men will combine to struggle together with Nature. "When men cease to fight against one another, whether by machine guns, or tariffs, or technical knowledge, there will still remain the ceaseless struggle with Nature." "The heroes of the future will be not the most colossal murderers—the Napoleons and the like—nor the most unscrupulous captains of industry—the oil-kings—but the kings of thought."

Sunday School Lessons for May.

The attention of the readers is called to the lessons for the next three months. They will deal with "The Life and work of Jesus Christ."

An effort will be made to interest the reader as well as the teacher. A sincere attention to the subject will be a source of inspiration. to the readers personally, and indirectly through them to the churches with which they are identified.

MR. CAUDLE LENDS FIVE POUNDS.

"You ought to be very rich, Mr. Caudle. I wonder who'd lend you five pounds! But so it is: a wife may work and slave. Oh, dear! the many things that might have been done with five pounds! As if people picked up money in the streets! But you always *were* a fool, Mr. Caudle! I've wanted a black satin gown these three years, and that five pounds would have pretty well bought it. But it's no matter how I go—not at all. Everybody says I don't dress as becomes your wife—and I don't; but what's that to you, Mr. Caudle? Nothing. Oh, no! You can have fine feelings for everybody but those that belong to you. I wish people knew you as I do—that's all. You like to be called liberal and your poor family pays for it.

And the girls want bonnets, and when they're to get 'em, I can't tell. Half five pounds would have bought 'em, but now they must go without. Of course *they* belong to you; and anybody but your own flesh and blood, Mr. Caudle.

The man called for the water-rate to-day; but I should like to know how people are to pay taxes who throw away five pounds to every fellow that asks them.

Perhaps you don't know that Jack this morning knocked the shuttlecock through his bedroom window. I was going to send for the glazier to mend it; but, after you lent that five pounds, I was sure we couldn't afford it. Oh, no; the window must

go as it is; and pretty weather for a dear child to sleep with a broken window. He's got a cold already on his lungs, and I shouldn't at all wonder if that broken window settled him; if the dear boy dies, his death will be upon his father's head, for I'm sure we can't now pay to mend windows. We might, though, and do a good many more things, if people didn't throw away their five pounds.

Next Tuesday the fire insurance is due. I should like to know how it's to be paid. Why, it can't be paid at all. That five pounds would have just done it, and now insurance is out of the question. And there never were so many fires as there are now. I shall never close my eyes all night; but what's that to you, so people can call you liberal, Mr. Caudle? Your wife and children may all be burnt alive in their beds, as all of us to a certainty shall be, for the insurance must drop. After we've insured for so many years! but how, I should like to know, are people to insure who make ducks and drakes of their five pounds?

I did think we might go to Margate this summer. There's poor Caroline, I'm sure she wants the sea. But no, dear creature, she must stop at home; she'll go into consumption, there's no doubt of that; yes, sweet little angel. I've made up my mind to lose her now. The child might have been saved; but people can't save their children and throw away five pounds too.

I wonder where little Cherub is? While you were lending that five pounds the dog ran out of the shop. You know I never let it go into the street, for fear it should be bit by some mad dog and come home and bite the children. It wouldn't at all astonish me if the animal was to come home with hydrophobia and give it to all the family. However, what's your family to you, so you can play the liberal creature

with five pounds ?

Do you hear that shutter how it's banging to and fro ? Yes, I know what it wants as well as you : it wants a new fastening. I was going to send for the blacksmith to-day. But now it's out of the question : now it must bang of nights, since you have thrown away five pounds.

Well, things have come to a pretty pass ! This is the first night I ever made my supper of roast beef without pickles. But who is to afford pickles when folk are always lending five pounds ?

Do you hear the mice running about the room ? I hear them. If they were only to drag you out of bed, it would be no matter. *Set a trap for 'em ?* But how are people to afford the cheese, when every day they lose five pounds ?

Hark ! I'm sure there's a noise downstairs. It wouldn't surprise me if there were thieves in the house. Well, it may be the cat ; but thieves are pretty sure to come some night. There's a wretched fastening to the back door ; but these are not times to afford bolts and bars, when fools won't take care of their five pounds.

Mary Anne ought to have gone to the dentist's to-morrow. She wants three teeth pulled out. Now it can't be done. Three teeth, that quite disfigure the child's mouth. But there they must stop, and spoil the sweetest face that ever was made. Otherwise she'd have been the wife for a lord. Now, when she grows up, who'll have her ? Nobody. We shall die, and leave her alone and unprotected in the world. But what do you care for that ? Nothing ; so you can squander away five pounds.

And now, Mr. Caudle, see what misery you've brought on your wretched family ! I can't have a satin gown—the girls can't have new bonnets—the water-rate must stand over—Jack must get his death through a broken window—our fire

insurance can't be paid, so we shall be victims to the devouring element—we can't go to Margate, and Caroline will go to an early grave—the dog will come home and bite us all mad—that shutter will go banging for ever—the mice never let us have a wink of sleep—the thieves be always breaking into the house—and our dear Mary Anne be forever left an unprotected maid—and all, all, Mr. Caudle, because *you will go on lending five pounds.*"

Douglas Jerrold.

BARBARA FRIETCHIE.

By WHITTIER.

Up from the meadows rich with corn,
Clear in the cool September morn,

The clustered spires of Frederick
stand
Green-walled by the hills of Mary-
land.

Round about them orchards sweep,
Apple and peach tree fruited deep,

Fair as a garden of the Lord
To the eyes of the famished rebel
horde

On that pleasant morn of the early
fall

When Lee marched over the moun-
tain wall,

Over the mountains winding down,
Horse and foot into Frederick town

Forty flags with their silver stars,
Forty flags with their crimson bars,

Flapped in the morning wind : the
sun
Of noon looked down, and saw not
one.

Up rose old Barbara Frietchie then,
Bowed with her fourscore years and
ten ;

Bravest of all in Frederick town,
She took up the flag the men hauled
down

In her attic window the staff she set,
To show that one heart was loyal yet.

Up the street came the rebel tread,
Stonewall Jackson riding ahead.

Under his slouched hat left and right
He glanced; the old flag met his
sight.

"Halt!"—the dust-brown ranks
stood fast.

"Fire!"—out blazed the rifle-blast.

It shivered the window, pane and
sash;

It rent the banner with seam and
gash.

Quick, as it fell, from the broken
staff

Dame Barbara snatched the silken
scarf;

She leaned far out on the window-
sill,

And shook it forth with a royal will.

"Shoot, if you must, this old grey
head,

But spare your country's flag," she
said

A shade of sadness, a blush of shame,
Over the face of the leader came;

The nobler nature within him stirred
To life at that woman's deed 'and
word:

"Who touches a hair of yon grey
head

Dies like a dog! March on!" he
said.

All day long through Frederick
Street

Sounded the tread of marching feet:

All day long that free flag toss't
Over the heads of the rebel host.

Ever its torn folds rose and fell
On the loyal winds that loved it
well;

And through the hill-gaps sunset
light

Shone over it with a warm good-
night.

Barbara Frietchie's work is o'er,
And the rebel rides on his raids no
more.

Honour to her! and let a tear
Fall, for her sake, on Stonewall's
bier.

Over Barbara Frietchie's grave,
Flag of Freedom and Union, wave!

Peace and order and beauty draw
Round thy symbol of light and law;

And ever the stars above look down
On thy stars below in Frederick Town.

SLOWLY THE BIBLE OF THE RACE IS WRIT.

BY DR. SAVAGE.

Now let me ask you to look abroad
a little, and see how wide, how un-
speakably magnificent, is the real
conception of the growth of God's
bible revelation to the race. The
revelation of God began with the
first morning. It is progressive, con-
tinuous revelation. It is wide as the
race. God has always been revealing
himself to men, just as fast and just
as far as they could think and feel
and hear and see and write down the
record.

Think for a moment how petty
our ideas are. Shall we confine God's
scientific revelation to the dreams
and fancies of certain Jews thousands

and thousands of years ago? Where has God written his scientific record of himself? Is it not in hieroglyphs of stars across the heavens? Has he not written with his finger on the rock leaves of the earth under our feet? Has he not written in the constitution of matter that the chemist investigates and unfolds? Has he not written in the wonderful discoveries that have been made as to the nature of matter, as to light, as to all the marvellous forces that make up the universe all around us?

Here is God at work now, writing His word. Just as fast and as far as we can read it, we discover his revelation of truth. And his prophets and apostles here are Copernicus and Galileo and Kepler, and Newton and Herschel, and the great names of those who have reverently followed after the thoughts of God as manifested in the Universe around us.

And there is that greatest revelation of all, so far as our scientific glimpse of this bible is concerned, that we call Evolution,—a conception of the Universe in all its wonder and range; and Herbert Spencer is here apostle and prophet.

Is not God revealing himself in the development of life on this planet, from the lowest form in the ooze of the ocean shores up to the highest development of man? And here those who have read and written it down are the great biologists,—Darwin, Huxley, and their host of co-workers.

Is not God manifesting himself in the unfolding and development of the race? And here are the great anthropologists, those who have studied men from the beginning, from the first steps that he took towards civilisation until to-day,—are not these the scribes who have written down some fragments of God's holy and wondrous law?

And when you leave the scientific side, consider another revelation of God. God shows himself to us not

only as truth, but as beauty; and all those who from the far-off beginning until to-day have caught glimpses of the glory and beauty and wonder of form and colour—the artists, painters, sculptors—have helped shadow forth and reveal to us a little of the infinite beauty of God.

And the great musicians—how they have attempted to give voice to that which cannot be put into speech,—the marvellous harmonies of this magnificent universe of ours!

And as to the ethical teachings of the world,—shall we shut our eyes to all that we do not find within this bible? If something that is true has been uttered anywhere on earth, a thousand, ten thousand years ago, in Egypt, India, China, the isles of the sea, no matter where if it is true, it is God's truth, just as much as though it were in the New Testament or the Old.

Shall we shut our eyes to the ethical teachings of Lao-tsze, of Confucius, of the Buddha, of Mohammed, of Antoninus, of Epictetus, of Seneca, because they are not in this book? They have been wrought out as the result of the same experience in living on the part of struggling and sinning and falling and rising men, as those that are contained here; and, if they are true, they are God's truth, and profitable for our instruction.

What shall we say of the great lessons of heroism, of noble living, that we find all over the world? The martyrs—they are not confined to one religion; the saints—they are not confined to one religion; the heroes—they are not of any one race. The men who have lived for truth, who have died for truth—are they not God's heroes, though there is no record of them in this book? Are they not a part of the divine revelation of what it means to be noble men and women?

Is not God speaking to his children under every sky? Are not those of

other colours and other races as dear to the infinite father-heart as are we? Shall we not consider a part of this divine revelation the consecrations, wherever we find them—mothers giving their health and their lives for their children; common, plain, simple men living honestly and nobly and devotedly in the midst of commonplace conditions? All that makes up the sweetness, the beauty, the glory of human life—are these not a part of God's revelation of himself to his children?

And when we come to the songs, the psalms, the holy verse of the race, shall we refuse to look at them and give them their rank and power because they are not found in the Bible? We love and rejoice in the twenty-third psalm, the fortysecond Psalm, the one hundred and thirtyninth Psalm; but shall we stop there?

What about "Abt Vogler" and "Rabbi Benn Ezra," and many another of Browning, as divine, as inspired, as helpful, as glorious, as any to be found anywhere on earth? What of some of the wondrous words of Tennyson, what of Whittier's "Two Angels" and "My Psalm," and the "Eternal Goodness"? No more inspired religious verses in any Bible, in any land, under any sky than some of Whittier's.

What of Lowell's "Bibliolatress," "After the Buriel," "A Parable," and a dozen others, touching the deepest and highest things in the religious feelings and aspirations of the race?

What of Walt Whitman's "Joy, Shipmates, Joy," "Whispers of of Heavenly Death," and many another that on wings of light carry us over the borders into the blessedness of immortal life?

So wherever we find a truth, wherever we find a beauty, wherever we find a precept of righteousness, wherever we find a song of religious life and aspiration, wherever we find

heroic characters walking with their faces alight with that glory that "never was on sea or land,"—wherever we find any of these things, we find God again to-day; and we walk with him and we talk with him and we feel his touch, and we hear tones of his loving and tender and sympathetic voice.

"Slowly the Bible of the Race is writ."

It began when man began to live. It is not finished to-day; it never will be finished. Every race has written a chapter or a verse. Every age has contributed to it; and in all the future there will be ever new and fresh contributions; because there will ever be a wider and deeper and higher unfolding of the thought and the love and the life of God.

THE STORY OF THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR.

Old King Ægeus reigned in Athens. He had conquered many enemies, and he was dearly loved by his people. There was but one thing that interrupted his prosperity, and made every ninth spring a time of mourning in Athens. Minos, King of Crete, received a tribute from Ægeus every nine years; not a tribute of gold and silver, which it had been easy to pay, but a tribute of seven youths and seven maidens, who were torn from their parents and friends, sent into a foreign country, and there exposed to be eaten by the Minotaur. This was a dreadful monster, half man, half bull; and none that was given to be his food had ever escaped from his fury.

Ægeus had a son, by name Theseus. He was a young prince of a courageous heart; and he could not endure that his fellow-countrymen should suffer from so dreadful a slavery. So he went, on a day, to his father Ægeus, and thus spake to him: "My father, the time draws

nigh when Athens must send her tribute to Crete ; even now, mothers are clasping their daughters to their breasts, and weeping over them ; and fathers look on their sons, as yet in all the pride of youth, and think how soon they may be rent in pieces by a ravenous and unsparing monster. Hear me now ; it is our wont, as thou knowest, to cast lots for those that must go. Let us do as we are accustomed for the maidens, and for six of the youths ; for the seventh I freely offer myself. If ever I reign in Athens, I will reign as a free king : if I cannot deliver my people, I can at least perish for them."

King Ægeus looked on his son, and knew not whether to joy or to sorrow. He feared to lose him in the pride of his strength ; but the love of his people prevailed. "Go forth, my son," he said, "and the immortal gods protect you. For me, till you return I shall not know one happy hour ; shorten, therefore, as far as you can, the time of my sorrow. It is our custom that the ship which bears my subjects to Crete should carry black sails. If you return with triumph, let them be white ; if they are still black, I shall know too well what hath befallen."

Theseus promised as his father bade, and went out into the city. The Athenians, when they heard of the courage of their prince, gave him a thousand blessings. They hardly dared to hope that he would conquer ; and yet they hardly knew how to fear that he could fail. The day came. The black vessel lay at anchor in the harbour ; the chosen youths and maidens came down to the sea-shore ; and their friends, while they wept bitterly, could not weep inconsolably. Theseus came down from the palace, and Ægeus, king of men. The signal was given ; the rowers bent to their oars, the trireme cleft her way through the waters ; the crowd on the shore grew small as specks ; the shore itself, the cliffs, and the hills, faded

into the blue distance, and still the vessel sped onwards to her journeys end.

Crete is in sight. First a long line of coast rose from the sea ; then mountains swelled above the valleys, and hills took form and shape ; then trees were seen on the downs, and houses by the side of the roads. And lastly, Gnosus, the royal city, beautiful with its hundred temples, glowed red in the setting sun.

Then there was wailing among the maidens, and silent terror among the youths. Only Theseus was firm and calm. He looked well to his armour, and saw that his sword was bright. His helmet was of dog's skin, plated and wrought with brass. For its crest it had a winged horse ; its cheek-pieces were sculptured with the deeds of Zeus ; and the penthouse frowned horribly over the eye. His brazen mitre, or shirt of mail, shone like the sun ; he had his zone and brigandine ; and his thorax, or breastplate, was coupled with studs of gold.

They told King Minos that the strangers were come as he sat with his nobles at the banquet. "Give them good cheer"—he said—"to-night, and lodge them well in my palace. To-morrow they will have crossed the river whence there is no return, and be judged by gloomy Dis."

"Be of good cheer, companions and friends," said Theseus, the equal of the gods. "We shall yet escape by the favour of Zeus, and return to sea-girt Attica, and to Ægeus, king of men."

Apart in her chamber sat Ariadne, the golden-haired daughter of Minos. She had heard of the coming of the strangers, and the tears were in her eyes. She knew that Theseus had come with the rest, offered by himself to death. So she cast in her mind how she might save him, and called on Athene to inspire her. And while she thought on the matter, this seemed the best resolve. She called

Gorgo, her ancient nurse, and spake a word in her ear.

With steps that trembled through age, Gorgo went down from the chamber. She entered the hall where Theseus sat, and beckoned him forth from his companions

"Ariadne"—thus spoke she—"greetes you well, the golden-haired daughter of Minos. From her I come a messenger; and I pray you hear my words. You trust in your helmet and your sword; and of helmet and sword you will have need. But they alone cannot deliver you; deliverance must come from elsewhere."

"I know," said Theseus, "that help is of the gods, who preside over mortal men. On them I have called for aid, and my supplications shall not be in vain."

"But they give assistance by men, and they work by human hands. The Minotaur, hideous monster, dwells in the heart of a labyrinth. If you conquer him, your task is but half done: for who will guide you forth? You will wander for ever in the mazes of the labyrinth, till you perish with hunger and weariness."

Then the heart of Theseus sank within him; and he looked for speedy death. "Better," he said, "to die at once, than to perish at leisure by famine. The monster shall devour us all; destruction that is bitter will be speedy."

"Not so, my son," said Gorgo, "I have better counsel than this. Of yourself, you can never escape; but there are those who know the labyrinth. Ariadne wil fix a golden thread from the entrance to the monster's abode. Follow it surely, for it cannot err: trust it, for it cannot mislead. So shall you return to fertile Attica, and to Ægeus, king of men."

Thus having spoken, she went forth; and the heart of the hero was gladdened. Then he returned to his companions, and they crowned the

cups with wine. And now the sun was in the west, and immortal night came on.

When Aurora, with her saffron-coloured garments, led forth the holy day, up from his couch sprang Theseus, Prince of lovely Athens. And Minos gave orders to his servants; and they formed the procession of death. A phalanx of stout-limbed Cretans girt in the Athenian captives and the king himself looked on, and deemed that they were marked for destruction.

Thus, with mournful steps, they trod the plain of Gnosus. The maidens trembled and wept; the youths were full of hope. But Athene, mindful of the hero, sent a heron on the right hand; and, with clanging wings, he accompanied their journey to the labyrinth. And Theseus exulted in the omen, and called on the blue-eyed goddess.

At length they reached the labyrinth; and the phalanx opened in front. A chosen guard received the prisoners, and conducted them through the maze; and evermore as they proceeded, the bellowings of the Minotaur waxed more dreadful. When they were near its den, the guard fell behind. With pikes and javelins and angry words, they urged on the captives that shrank. Theseus, the equal of the gods, went on as to certain victory; and his friends looked to their leader, and gathered courage from his sight. But when they were close to the monster, the guard retired with speed; for they feared lest he should rush forth in his fury, and slay them with the rest.

Theseus came forward in front, and bade his comrades hold back. They clustered together at a distance, and awaited the end of the battle. Forth came the monster, breathing fire, and wounding the ground with his brazen hoofs. He lashed his side with his tail; he ploughed the earth with his horns; he looked this way and that for an enemy to be conquered; till at last, with a

sidelong bound, he leaped upon the Prince of Athens. But Theseus was ready for the attack; he sprang nimbly out of the path of the beast, and smote him behind the neck with his mighty sword. The Minotaur bellowed yet more horribly, but withdrew a little space; and Theseus, turning to his comrades, bade them be of good cheer.

“Youths,” he said, “have patience yet awhile; the Minotaur is, like ourselves, of flesh. Maidens, long joy after short sorrow; yet shall ye see the holy hearth, and the household gods; yet shall ye be received to the tender arms of your mothers.”

More he would perchance have added, but the monster came on more terribly. He was bleeding fast, but had gathered fresh cunning from defeat. He avoided Theseus, for he knew his strength, but he rushed furiously on the band of maidens. But the hero was swifter than his swift enemy, and he compelled him to turn again. So they stood facing each other, the man and the monstrous beast. Each watched, till his adversary should lay himself open to a wound. Long they watched, long they waited; neither would give advantage to the other. At length, weary of suspense, the Minotaur bent its head for a sideways blow: and Theseus, calling on Athene, plunged his sword to the hilt in the heart of the monster. It stood for a moment as still as a rock; blood poured from its nostrils and mouth; then it fell with a sullen bellow, and breathed out its life on the sand.

There was joy and exultation in that little band, till the voice of Theseus was heard: “Seek for the golden thread; our task, till that be found, is but half complete.” They sought it with care, and they found it, glittering among the mossy walls of the labyrinth. And they tracked it forward evermore; but when it seemed to guide by the most unlikely road, there they trusted in

it most fully. Sometimes one of the band would counsel that they should leave it, and choose a path that seemed clearer; but Theseus strictly forbade it, for he trusted in the guidance of Ariadne. And, by degrees, the road grew plainer—they were manifestly coming forth from the labyrinth. Still they held on unwearingly, and at length they stood on the shore.

Old King Ægeus sat on his tower, looking out over the wind-dark sea. “The sail,” said the watchman, “the sail from Crete: it is black as the house of Erebus.” For Theseus had forgotten in his joy, to obey his father’s words: and Ægeus deemed that his son had fallen, and he cast himself into the water and perished. On came the ship, with a favouring gale, and brought life to them that looked for death. Maidens were enfolded in the arms of their mothers; fathers wept with joy over their sons. He only that had saved his people was sad; for his heart was heavy for Ægeus.

We who have, like Theseus, to do battle with a great enemy, are also like him, encircled about with a labyrinth—the difficult paths of this world. Oftentimes we know not which way to take; oftentimes we are in danger of mistaking wrong for right. But our Ariadne is called wisdom, and she has not left us without a guide. The golden line that we must follow, is conscience; to that we must trust, for it is the voice of GOD, HE has made it; He, if we call on Him, will enlighten it; so it will lead us in safety through the winding paths of the world, till we reach the sea, which we must of necessity cross, before we can behold our Father’s House.

DR. NEALE.

“The happiness of men consists in life. And life is in labour.”—*Tolstoy*

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS.

It is necessary, if good work is to be done in our Sunday Schools, that the lessons should, as far as possible, bear upon some definite subject. For the month—or better still, for the quarter—a definite subject should be taken up, in order to give the children an interest, and also teach them the need of a systematic study of any given topic. This has been ably shown by several who have written in reply to the suggestion made to take up Epictetus. All the teachers who take an interest in their work will probably agree with this. Seeing, however, that teachers are not at present prepared to take up Epictetus, the following subject, namely, “The Life and Work of Jesus Christ,” will be dealt with for the next three months. In order to give the teachers a greater interest in this, a forecast of the subjects for the three months is appended:—

May 6.—“Jesus Christ.”

„ 13.—“His Method of Teaching.”

„ 20.—“What Jesus taught about God.”

„ 27.—“What Jesus taught about Himself.”

June 3.—“What Jesus taught about Man.”

„ 10.—“His idea of righteousness.”

„ 17.—“What Jesus taught about wealth.”

„ 24.—“The central thought—the Kingdom of God.”

July 1.—“Conditions of Entrance into the Kingdom.”

„ 8.—“The blessings of the Kingdom.”

„ 15.—“His teaching about the Church.”

„ 22.—“His teaching about the Family.”

„ 29.—“His teaching about the End of the World.”

NATURE NOTES—MAY.

“Marke the faire blooming of the
hawthorn-tree,
Who, finely cloathed in a robe of
white,
Fills full the wanton eye with May's
delight.”

CHAUCER.

May is the culmination of Spring, the month of flowers; beloved of our English poets from Chaucer downwards.

In the orchard we are tempted to linger amid the beauty of the rosy apple-blossoms and pure white clusters of the cherry, where the air is sweet and the blackbird sings.

The young grass in the parks is soft to tread upon; whilst overhead the horse-chestnut spreads its large radiated leaves. In bloom, these trees remind one of great candelabra. Now, too, the lime is dressed in its freshest green.

What is sweeter than the shade of newly-opened beech leaves? These delicate bannerets just shield you from the sun's heat, yet transmit all the gold of its cheerful light. Gilbert White called the beech “the most lovely of all forest trees, whether we consider its smooth rind or bark, its glossy foliage, or graceful pendulous boughs.” And it is hard to dispute its supremacy.

In the meadows the daisies are flowering side by side with the Spring buttercups,—the creeping buttercup, which has runners like the strawberry plant and flowers before the more conspicuous meadow buttercup.

The daisy is a very handy and hard working little plant. In Spring it is the very earliest to bloom and begins setting its seed before the other blossoms are well awake.

Plants may be said to have their habits as well as animals. Many flowers close their petals during rain, thereby preventing the honey and pollen from being spoilt. The wood-sorrel droops at the approach of rain. It shrinks when roughly gathered, and folds up its leaves when the wind is wild

The daisy opens at sunrise and closes at sunset, whence its name "day's eye." The dandelion is said to open about seven and close at five. The white water-lily is open from about seven to four, and sinks beneath the water for the night. The common morning-glory opens at dawn and closes at noon, unless the day is cloudy, when it remains open the whole day. The evening primrose opens at sunset, and some species of cereus open when it is night.

There is a little plant called "John-go-to-bed-at-noon," from its habit of opening at 4 a.m. and closing just before twelve. Farmers' boys in some districts regulate their dinner-time by it.

One of the most interesting and latest to arrive of the migratory birds is the large-eyed night swallow. It is known by various names, such as fern-owl, goat-sucker, night-hawk, night-jar, and eve-jar. The last two names are given it by the children of the moors, on account of the well-known noise it makes,—a kind of "churr-er" or whirring sound. This bird is very strong-winged and wide-mouthed and lives on insects that show themselves in the evening, and for which it hunts till late at night.

No one should miss seeing all they can of the country this month. It possesses a beauty and spirit all its own. The time, indeed, is too precious to spend indoors now,—

"For up in the bright blue sky,
The quivering lark is singing;
The thrush in copses nigh
Shouts out the joy it's bringing."

"Then leave your weary moiling,
Your desks and shops to-day;
'Tis sin to waste on toiling
Tis jubilee of May."

F. ELSDON.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS FOR MAY.

JESUS CHRIST.

It is possible—even probable—that much of our knowledge of the Christian religion is hearsay. People have heard from the pulpit, in the Sunday School, from parents, a great deal about Jesus Christ and about the Christian religion, but they have not carefully considered the question for themselves.

We begin to-day a series of lessons which will demand careful study of the Gospels.

THE EXTERNAL FEATURES OF JESUS

It is doubtful whether we have any authentic portrait of Jesus. The type accepted by artists is probably as old as the manuscripts of the Gospels, but how far back the type may go we cannot say with any degree of certainty. It would be very helpful if we possessed a portrait. If we read the Gospels we shall find a certain type thrown out in words, but no picture of any feature. He probably wore the usual garments of the common people. He was essentially poor and a working man

THE CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS TEACHING.

1. Authority. We are told that "He taught as one having authority." The people felt the truth of ordinary and recognised teachers of His day. They taught according to the traditions of the past. They

were essentially conservatives. They never said what they thought, but what some renowned teacher in the past had said. Jesus taught what he thought. Whether this agreed with tradition or not was not the point, but was it true. His authority was that of sincerity. The Scribes *argued*, but Jesus throws out the thoughts he knew to be true, and they received confirmation from the experience of the hearers.

2. Kindness. Again we are told that the "people heard him gladly." The winsomeness and graciousness of his attitude won the people. This is confirmed by several incidents reported in his life. "Publicans and sinners formed a large portion of his audience. This revealed his sympathy with them.

Again, his attitude to little children shows the same winsomeness. Illustrate this by reading the hymn, "I think when I read that sweet story of old."

3. Severity. Kind and tender as Jesus was with the common people, he could nevertheless be very stern at times and under certain circumstances. There are two things which always call forth strong opposition from Jesus:—

1. Indifference and cruelty towards the weaker and less privileged class.—*Read Matthew xxii 1-24.*

2. Insincerity in thought or in deed.—*Read Matthew xxii 25-32.*

Though we have no portrait, yet we may make, as artists do, a picture of Jesus. The picture the fourth gospel gives us is, that his was a "kind, honest face" "full of grace and truth."

THE METHOD OF HIS TEACHING.

If you read a few authors, or listen to a few speakers, you will find that they differ very much in "the way they put things." Jesus had a way

of putting things. To-day we will try to understand this.

Before we enter into this, we must remember that Jesus never wrote anything himself.

It is doubtful whether Jesus could write. In those days there were no schools as we have to-day. He could read, but whether he could write is uncertain. This leads us to the first thing—

THE TEACHING OF JESUS WAS ORAL.

What Jesus taught has been transmitted to us from tradition by the early Christian Church. We cannot definitely say when the Gospels were written.

From first to last Jesus spoke to the people freely. Different from the teacher in the pulpit or the teacher in the school, he went from village to village and to the homes of the people and spoke his message according to circumstances. One thing clear in this open method is that he adapted himself to the people he spoke to.

HIS TEACHING WAS POPULAR.

It was popular not in the sense that it appealed to the prejudices of the people, but popular in the sense of being easily understood.

(a) The language was simple. Men and women who were unlearned easily grasped the meaning of his thought, because given in words they understood

(b) Often conveyed through word pictures. Take the parables as an illustration. All the familiar scenes of life are pressed into the service of thought. The social every-day life of the people stands out prominently in the parables we read in the Gospels.

IT WAS UNCONVENTIONAL.

A sense of homeliness pervades the tradition which has come down to us. Sometimes he enters the synagogue and adopts the ordinary, conventional method of teaching,

but generally it is the market place, the mountain side, the boat on the lake side which are pressed into his service. How different all this is from the conventional ways of the church to-day. Jesus was a Protestant, a non-conformist—"whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist."

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT GOD.

The usual meaning of Religion is the recognition of man's relation to the Unseen. Sometimes people try to make it mean man's relation to the seen, but it is necessary for us to adhere to the usual meaning, and to ask what did Jesus teach about the unseen? What did Jesus teach about God? Jesus, of course, like every great reformer, has taught men about character, conduct,—but he has also taught men something about God.

THE UNITY OF GOD.

The people among whom Jesus lived were monotheists—believers in one God. Though in the past they had different ideas, they had as a people come to recognise the oneness of God. Jesus never departed from this. This is illustrated by the story of one who came to obtain information about "Eternal Life"—(*Matt. xix 16-22*). Jesus says, "There is but *one* who is good." Again, Jesus insists that we should love God with our whole heart. It would have gone against the whole of his early training to teach anything else. This is one reason why we are Unitarians. Jesus taught Unitarianism. In this Jesus followed the great teachers of Israel.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

There are many ways in which Jesus teaches that God is good. To the young man we have mentioned he says that God is the only good—God is goodness itself.

1. God's care for the birds and the flowers. In *Matthew vi 26-30* we are told that the birds are fed and the flowers clothed with beauty by God. We are greater than these, therefore God looks after our interests by making generous provision for food and raiment.

2. God's perfection.

In *Matthew v 43-48* we are told that if we are really and truly God's children we would be generous and comprehensive in our affections. The sun rises on the evil and on the good. The rain falls on both just and unjust. God is comprehensive in his mercies.

3. God is our father.

The term father stands to us for a very close relationship. It includes care, protection and guidance. God is, according to Jesus, willing to be to us all that the term father includes.

From this follows:—

1. That we should love goodness. Wherever it is seen we should praise it. To love the good we see is to love God.

2. We should learn to trust God. There are many things in life we do not understand. We should be prepared to say with Jesus: Because we believe God is good, "Thy will be done."

3. We should serve one another. We are all the children of God, independent of creed. As children of the Heavenly Father who loves us, we should serve each other.

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT HIMSELF?

This may seem a difficult lesson, because Jesus after all teaches very little about himself. People, however, have made out so many things about Jesus that it is necessary to ask the question, "What does he say about himself?"

Some say he was God, that he lived in Heaven before he lived on the earth. Also that he was the Messiah who was

predicted and expected by the Jews. People may say these things—but did he himself say them?

There is one difficulty we must at once face. We saw in one lesson that Jesus never wrote anything himself. All that we know about Jesus was told us by others. Now some people have written autobiographies, and books which include their teaching. Jesus never wrote anything, so we must go by what other people say about him and what other people tell us he taught.

There are four books which *report* to us.

Three—Matthew, Mark and Luke—give almost the same things.

One—John—gives a different aspect of Jesus.

JESUS NEVER TEACHES THAT HE WAS GOD.

When Jesus teaches about God, he says "My God and your God," "My Father and your Father," but he never says—is never reported to have said—"I am God."

He is reported to have said "The Father and I are one." We are not certain he said this, because the Gospel which reports it was written many years after Jesus was put to death, and we do not really know who wrote it. But even if he did say it, the meaning is that he was one in wish, desire, or will, with his Father. Nowhere does Jesus teach that he is God.

WAS JESUS THE MESSIAH?

The word "Messiah" is a Hebrew word and means in Greek "the Christ" and in English "the Anointed"—that is, one who is selected by God to do a special work. The Jews expected a Messiah to come to restore them to political power and glory.

When Jesus came they refused him because he did not fulfil their expectations. It is very uncertain whether Jesus ever thought he was the Anointed. Critics differ. If he did

he must have given the word Messiah a different meaning from what the Jews gave to it.

From these observations we conclude that Jesus himself simply appealed to his contemporaries as a reformer. His one great aim was not to put forth any claims other than those which could be verified by every individual through sincerity of life and communion with God

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

More and more, in spite of reactionaries, men are recognising the need of bringing the churches into line with modern requirements. Just as every other institution, the Church should reflect the spirit of the age; if she does not she must decay, and thus lose any influence she may otherwise exercise in building up a pure life on the earth. If the Church were really eager and sincere in her professions of sympathy, she would seek every opportunity to put herself in touch with all that is true and beautiful, and thus demonstrate to the multitude outside that her aim and purpose are to ennoble and perfect in all directions human aspirations. In many ways the Unitarian Church has played an important part in the progress of the nation. When other churches have stood for freedom in mere externals, such as the method of worship, the ritual of the Sanctuary, the Unitarian Church has fearlessly and consistently pointed out, that if religion is to be a living force, men must be free not only in the details of worship, but free to think for themselves the highest and noblest thoughts of God—and man.

But noble as the career of the Church has been, the position is purely theological. The subjects which have occupied her energies

have been the "Unity of God," the "humanity of Jesus," the "universality of revelation," and that "Character is the only sure and certain ground of salvation." Much of what Unitarianism has stood for, is to-day preached in many pulpits of other churches and other denominations. Freedom of thought is in the air. It is a part of the spirit of the age. It may not be called Unitarianism, but it is real, nevertheless. Our churches have succeeded in converting the age to almost everything but the name. The name has stood as a scandal, but the spirit of freedom it has stood for is eagerly grasped by all sincere minds who are trying to reconcile religion with the knowledge of the world in their possession. Whatever many pulpits may say, a large majority of thinking men have long realised that the old theological position is to-day impossible. Even if many have not consciously given up belief in miracles, they have mentally accepted the position that God works out his will, and carries on His purposes, through the operations of natural law. Order is the prevailing conception of the human mind. There is no spot in the extended universe opened up for contemplation by modern science where order does not prevail. Though, thus, there may be a lingering desire to piously look upon miracle, the new conception of the Universe is creating an atmosphere of indifference to many things dogmatised upon by men and women of a generation ago. The man in the street fails to find the point of contact between miracle and his daily bread. So with many other theological problems. Freedom of thought, new conceptions of the universe, consequently of God, of man, of duty, are in the air. Men cannot escape them. Willingly or unwillingly they are moulded by the spirit of a new age. Did all the Unitarian Churches close the doors of their chapels to-day, the work

they have done would live. All the other churches must sooner or later by circumstances over which they have no control, accept the modern outlook. The problems of Higher Criticism—the composition date, and authors of the Bible, both Old and New Testament, are forced upon our professors and theological tutors. The young men who to-day take up the Christian ministry have a point of view which thirty years ago would be perfect heresy. Theologically the Unitarians have done their work. The position they have occupied is the common ground of a coming generation, indeed is the common ground of the present generation. Theologically there is no need of a Unitarian Church. To the critical student of the commencement of the twentieth century—the student who carefully examines the attitude of the average man, and tries to understand the tendencies in operation, the conclusion is irresistibly forced home, that theology in the older sense is dead. The spirit of the age is expressed in the slang—though it may be irreverent—phrase, "Hang theology." To express God in the terms of theology is out of harmony with the spirit of the age. Theology is not read, outside the charmed circle of ministers and theological students. The writer once made a careful inquiry into the number of theological books used in a fairly large Free Library. Though some of the best and most modern works were available, it was surprising how few were read. Again, it may be said, the Unitarian Church has played its part and may safely leave the result in the hands of the people. What, then, it may be asked, are we to do? Should we cease to be? Is there nothing to be done? By no means! The work before us is more colossal than that of our theological forebears. Great and important as was the work they had to do; noble and courageous as

they were who did the work, the first thing we have to realise is that a great change has since taken place—a change that compels us to take a new point of view. Men are as eager as ever to hear of God, but He must be expressed not in the terms of theology, but in the terms of sociology. The problems which press and press heavily for solution are not “trinitarianism,” “the duty of Jesus,” “the place of the supernatural,” but such problems as poverty, the unemployed, the criminal, education, heredity, and environment. The education and training of the child, not as a wealth producing machine, but as a citizen; the causes which produce crime, and the elimination of the criminal; the housing of the people not for the purpose of extracting rent, but in such a way as to give at least decency and comfort and rest the reconstruction of society so that the workers shall have a more equitable share of the wealth produced; how to prevent the propagation of the unfit, and if prevention is impossible, the treatment of the unfit until prevention is possible; the building up of the City of God in which remorse, through sin and shame through wickedness, are minimised if not eliminated; a city of God here and now, that will create a greater hunger after a city of God hereafter—instead of a life that crushes out of thousands the desire, not only to live hereafter, but which crushes out any desire to live now and here; these are a few of the problems which are pressing for a solution. The Church which is prepared to take these up, as essential parts of its creed, will find no room to lament over the need of a new world to conquer. The creed of the future will be set in the terms of sociology. Religion needs socialising—and though the term is not used with any desire to hurt or wound any

sensitive mind—the socialisation of God and religion is the immediate duty, and indeed the honour, of the Church which has accomplished so much in the past. As there is a need of interpreting God and religion in social, rather than in theological terms, so there is a pressing need and a sacred call to a Church to give to the world the new interpretation, and thus realise the beautiful dream, not only of Jesus, but also the great prophets and seers of Israel, of a Kingdom of God upon the earth, the prayer of whose citizens will ever be—

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

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A country parson crossing the Atlantic when it was exceptionally rough got so afraid that they were all destined to a watery grave that he asked the captain if he could not have prayers.

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“There,” said the captain; “as long as you hear them swearing there is no danger.” The clergyman went back to his sympathetic wife, feeling better.

The storm increased, and with fear in his heart he staggered again to the fore-castle. The sailors were speaking just as strongly and as heartily as before.

“Mary,” said the parson, as he crawled into his bunk. “Mary, thank goodness, they are swearing yet!”

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